



B I O G R A P H Y

# RADIOHEAD

## OK COMPUTER

Thom Yorke \* vocals, guitar  
Jonny Greenwood \* guitar, keyboards  
Ed O'Brien \* guitar, vocals  
Colin Greenwood \* bass  
Phil Selway \* drums

"Take as long as you want, record it wherever you want, with whoever you want."  
- Parlophone

After touring for most of 1995 (including supporting R.E.M. in Europe and America), at the end of January 1996, we reconvened to start work on new material at our rehearsal studio, Canned Applause, a roughly converted old apple shed. Arrangements and parts to most of the songs were worked out at this stage. Rehearsals lasted until March 1996, when we went on tour to America and Canada for five weeks. This tour gave us the opportunity to start "playing in" new material.

On our return to the UK, we played several European festivals, culminating in two headline appearances at Galway, Ireland, and T in the Park, Glasgow. During this time, we set up our mobile recording studio back at Canned Applause, overseen by Nigel Godrich.

Nigel had engineered the Rak Studio sessions of The Bends, and co-produced with us a number of b-sides, notably "*Talkshow Host*" as well as the song "*Lucky*." This song was recorded in September 1995 for the Help album, a compilation released a week after its recording to raise funds and awareness for the charity Warchild in Bosnia.

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By July 1996, Canned Applause was set up for recording. It was the first time we had attempted to cut album tracks outside of a conventional studio environment. Despite the experimental and unconventional setting, four songs from Canned Applause found their way onto the album. The songs were "*Subterranean Homesick Alien*", "*Electioneering*", "*The Tourist*" and "*No Surprises*." This last song was, in fact, the first take from the first day of the Canned Applause sessions.

In August 1996, we returned to America to tour with Alanis Morissette, and again used it as an opportunity to play in new material.

Back home again in September, we moved our recording equipment from Canned Applause, and relocated to St Catherine's Court. Set in a secluded valley just outside Bath, it was the perfect environment to escape from any outside influences. We made much use of the various different rooms and atmospheres throughout the house, and our isolation from the outside world encouraged time to run at a different pace, making working hours more flexible and spontaneous.

Again, the set-up was unorthodox: we played in the ballroom, with Nigel Godrich recording us in the library. Thom sung "*Exit Music (For A Film)*" in the chilly, stone entrance hall; "*Let Down*" was recorded live at 3:00 AM in the ballroom. This was to be the first of two month-long sessions at St Catherine's, the second one starting in November, after spending October at home rehearsing.

By Christmas we had almost completed fourteen songs. They were finished and mixed in London during January and February 1997. The two songs left off the album, "*Polyethelene*" and "*A Reminder*," have appeared as b-sides to our first UK single release, "*Paranoid Android*."

- Colin Greenwood, Radiohead

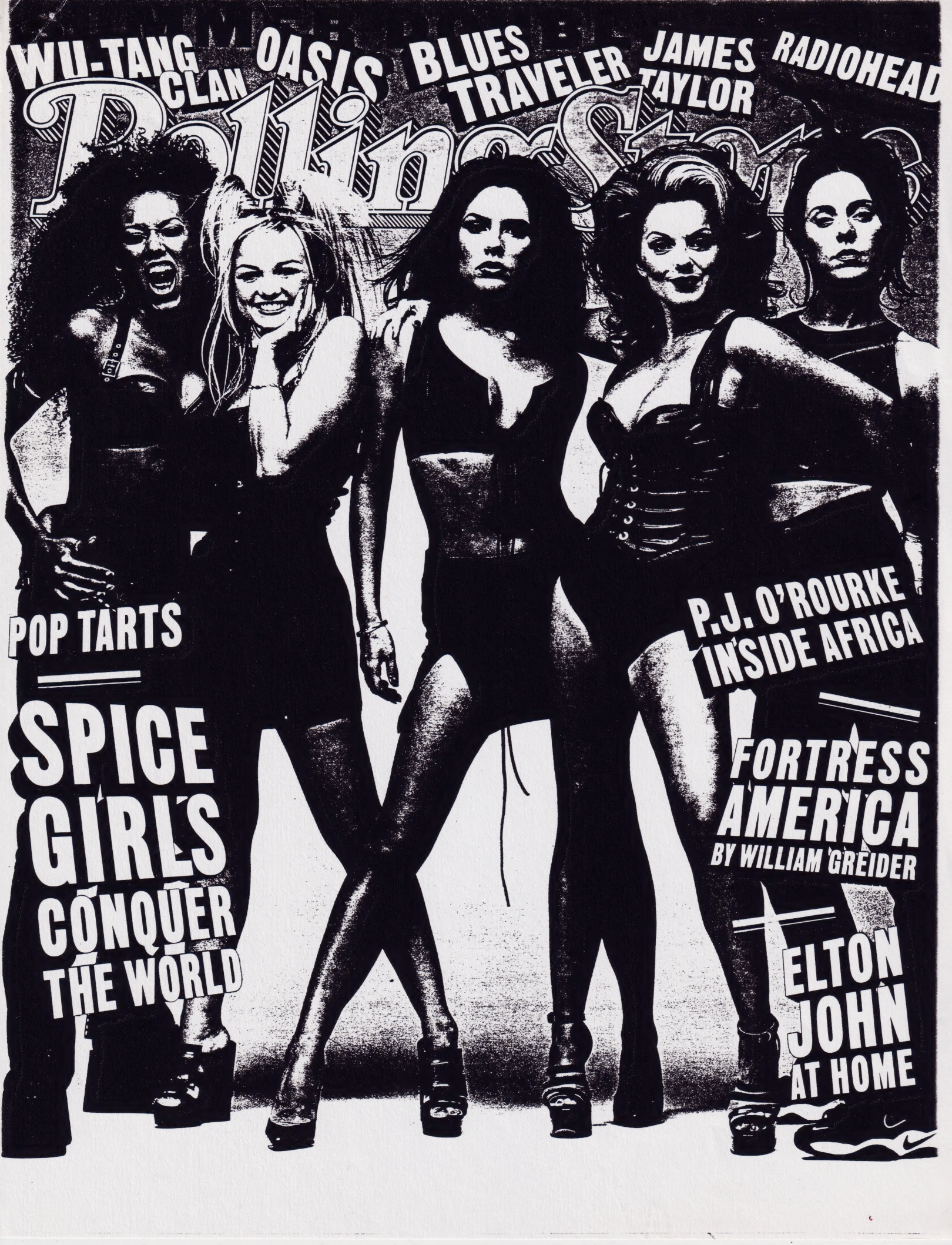
RADIOHEAD

OK COMPUTER

55229

July 1997





WU-TANG CLAN OASIS BLUES TRAVELER JAMES TAYLOR RADIOHEAD

# Rolling Stone

POP TARTS

SPICE GIRLS  
CONQUER  
THE WORLD

P.J. O'ROURKE  
INSIDE AFRICA

FORTRESS  
AMERICA  
BY WILLIAM GREIDER

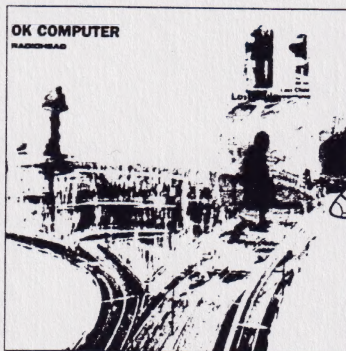
ELTON  
JOHN  
AT HOME



# RECORDINGS DEEP BLUE

{Radiohead break dark, new ground on their third album}

BY mark  
KEMP



**OK Computer**  
**RADIOHEAD**

Capitol

THE DAYS OF WHINE AND poses may be over, but don't tell that to Radiohead singer Thom Yorke. He has survived the demise of grunge with all of his anxiety and disillusionment intact. Which hardly means that his group's music hasn't matured. On the contrary, Radiohead are one of the few guitar-based bands of the mid-'90s that has grown by leaps and bounds. When their first single, "Creep," leapt out of MTV's Buzz Bin, in 1993, it came off like a Nirvana wanna-be from hell; the song's obligatory loud/soft dynamics and Yorke's self-deprecating lyrics rang empty. But one listen to Radiohead's third album, *OK Computer* – a stunning art-rock tour de force – will have you reeling back to their debut, *Pablo Honey*, for insight into the group's dramatic evolution.

In retrospect, the seeds of a powerful band were there from the beginning. *Pablo Honey* was a spotty affair, but Yorke's soaring, Bono-esque voice and the instrumental prowess of the band pointed to Radiohead's more ambitious second outing, *The Bends*. On that rec-





ord, the music not only complemented Yorke's pretty voice and pensive lyrics but it built on them, sculpting his expressions of inner conflict ("I need to wash myself again to hide all the dirt and pain. . .") into universal meditations on the kind of primal anguish that we all experience from time to time. The songs were stronger - owing more to the Beatles this time than to U2 - and Radiohead had expanded their palette to include heavy doses of psychedelic guitar, electronics and hints of glam rock.

On *OK Computer*, Radiohead take the ideas they had begun toying with on *The Bends* into the stratosphere. At a time when they could have played it safe, selling their psychedelic souls for more radio-friendly rock & roll, Radiohead have released a concept album whose theme - based on rock's age-old fear of the imminence of a world run by computers - unfolds gradually during the course of the album's 12 songs.


*OK Computer* is not an easy listen. From guitarist Jonny Greenwood's menacing riff that introduces the opener, "Airbag," to Yorke's fragile pleas to "slow down" on the final track, "The Tourist," each song takes time to reveal itself as a narrative link to the album's ultimately spiritual message. In the suite "Paranoid Android," acoustic and electric instruments float understatedly through the mix as Yorke sings, through clenched teeth, lines like "Ambition makes you look very ugly." Complex tempo changes, touches of dissonance, ancient choral music and a King Crimson-like melodic structure propel the song to its conclusion, where Yorke sings in a pleading voice, "God loves his children."

There are moments on "Paranoid Android" when Yorke sounds as though he's conjuring the spirit of Queen's Freddie Mercury. On several other tracks, Radiohead also draw from the past for inspiration. Yorke's throw-away words to "Karma Police" ("This is what you get when you mess with us") are rescued by the layered, "Strawberry Fields Forever" vibe of the music. "Let Down" is driven by Byrds-like chiming guitars. And the Eno-esque ambience of "Fitter Happier" - based around a computerized voice intoning platitudes like "Comfortable/Not drinking too much/Regular exercise at the gym . . ./Calm, fitter, healthier and more productive" - gives the song a claustrophobic, *Doll's House* feel.

Like R.E.M.'s recent *New Adventures in Hi-fi*, the music on *OK Computer* has

a surreal, cinematic quality. Also like the R.E.M. record, this album hints at some kind of dark spiritual crossroad. In the delicate "No Surprises," Yorke announces, "This is my final fit, my final bellyache." Where Radiohead might go from here is anyone's guess, but *OK Computer* is evidence that they are one rock band still willing to look the devil square in the eyes. ●





Everyone can play guitar  
(er... except the  
drummer): Radiohead in  
rehearsal, their secret  
studio, April 11, 1997.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

# Party On!

Q JUNE 1997





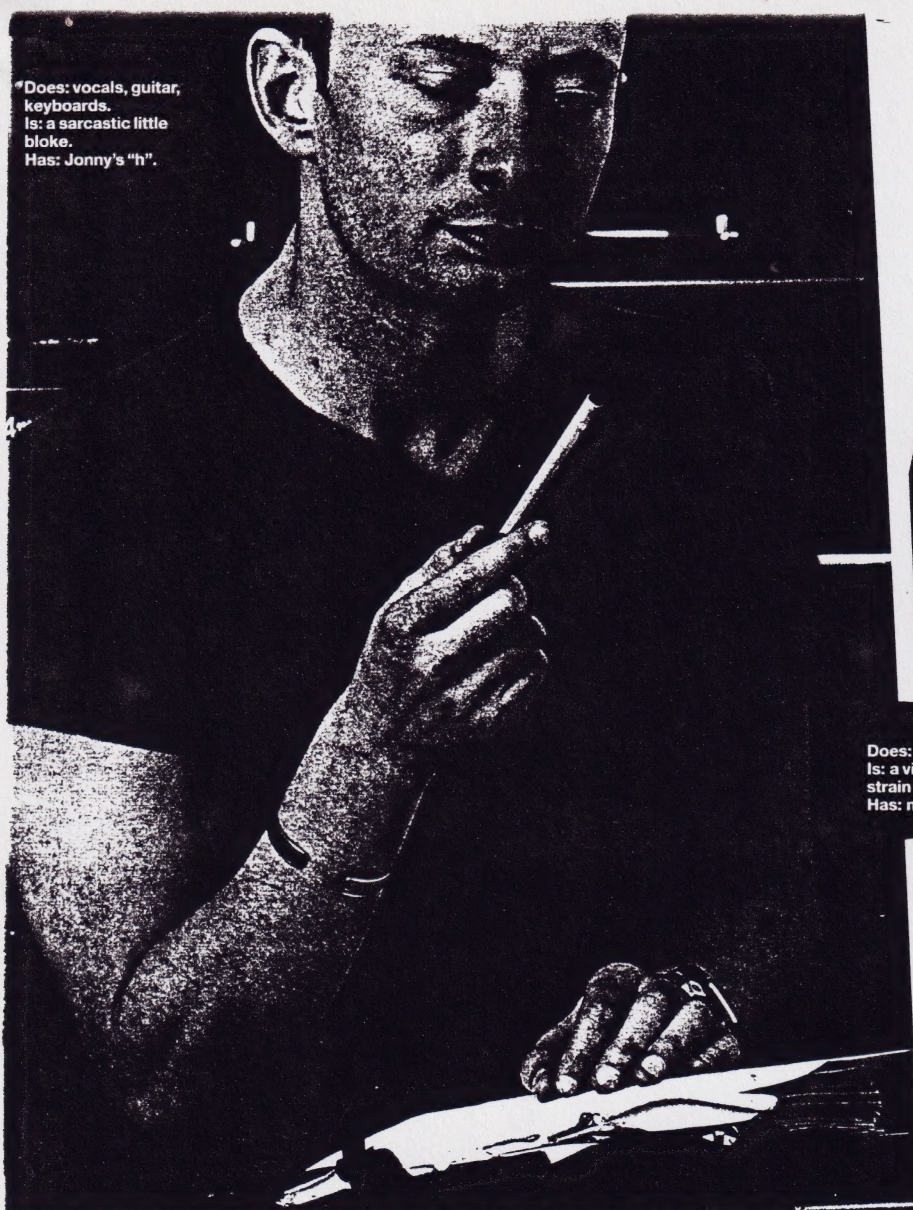
## Radiohead

**B**rightly early most weekday mornings before 9am, when other rock stars still have at least a good six hours of kip ahead of them – or have yet in fact to go to bed following another night of drunken or chemically induced shenanigans – Radiohead's curiously angular guitarist Jonny Greenwood can usually be found in the middle of a field in the quiet Oxfordshire countryside, flying his kite. If the widescreen possibilities of this undeniably evocative scene has a touch of Pink Floyd-like imagery about it, then that perhaps is no coincidence, since the soundtrack on the rake-thin 25-year-old man's personal stereo is *Meddle*, an album released in 1971, the year he was born.

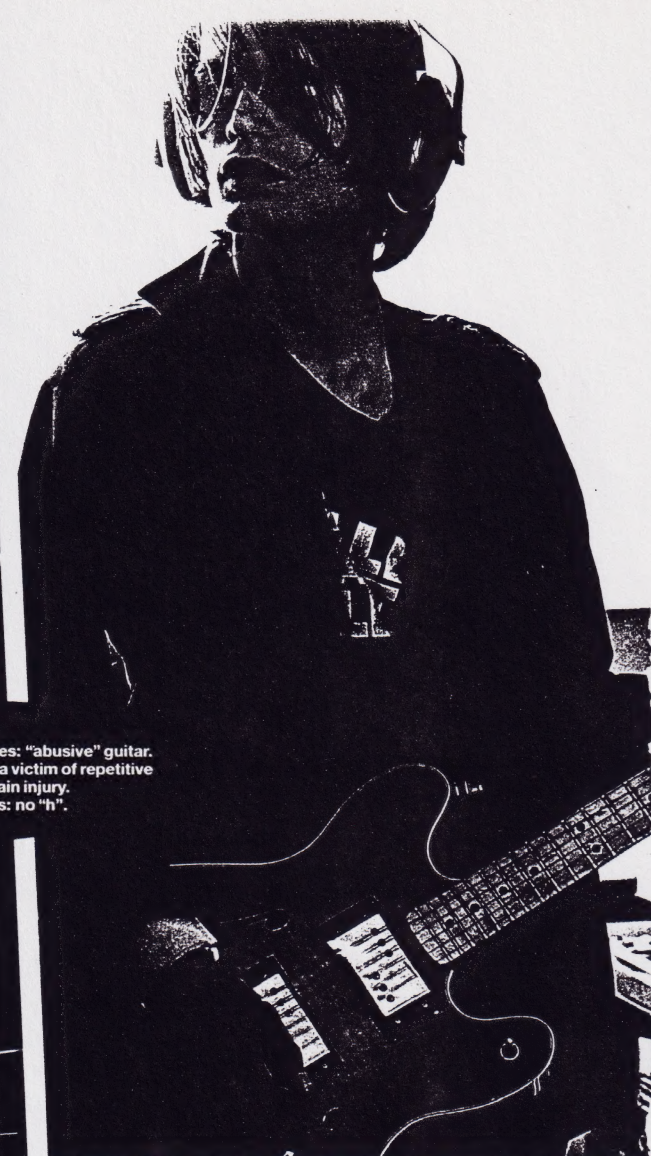
This evidence alone may not be enough to suggest that Radiohead are slowly, surely mutating into The New Pink Floyd. But then there are other factors which have to be taken into consideration. Not least the fact that singer Thom Yorke warmly recalls recording parts of their self-produced third album, *OK Computer*, at their recently acquired studio farmhouse while, outside the window, herds of Jersey cattle lumbered lazily through sunny fields. In the background, an industrial chimney belched acrid smoke into the sky. "It was the Floyd," he enthuses before – perhaps typically – feigning vomiting in self-disgust at having been forced to draw this seemingly unthinkable parallel himself. **ES**



Does: vocals, guitar, keyboards.  
Is: a sarcastic little bloke.  
Has: Jonny's "h".



Does: "abusive" guitar.  
Is: a victim of repetitive strain injury.  
Has: no "h".



## "When some guy comes up and buys you a drink and says that

Bassist Colin Greenwood has his own thoughts about his brother's kite-flying plot to turn Radiohead into a progressive rock ensemble.

"Jonny made us all watch Pink Floyd Live In Pompeii and said, 'Now this is how we should do videos,'" he offers, grinning, his already frighteningly voluminous eyes widening in mock disbelief. "I just remember seeing Dave Gilmour sitting on his arse playing guitar and Roger Waters with long greasy hair, sandals and dusty flares, staggers over and picks up this big beater and whacks this gong. Ridiculous."

Nevertheless, there is no getting away from it: Radiohead's keenly awaited third album is a sprawling, hugely experimental affair that cannot be described accurately without using the words "out" and "there". The return single, *Paranoid Android*, by way of an indication, is a six-and-a-half-minute epic in three movements. Jonny Greenwood admits that during the making of the record, he had found himself becoming involved in a brave, but perhaps futile side pursuit: trying to unearth half-decent prog rock albums.

"It's been very disappointing because most of it is awful," he softly admits in his engagingly

posh way. "I've got it into my head that prog rock must be good because it attracted a lot of fans. So far, I've just trawled through fairly tedious Genesis albums."

Aside from all of this, there has also been the suggestion that Radiohead have been gradually morphing into R.E.M. since the Oxford quintet's extended supporting sojourn on the Monster tour in the summer of 1995. Certainly Thom Yorke's friendship with Michael Stipe – who made the onstage pronouncement that "Radiohead are so good, they scare me" – has been well documented. In fact, Yorke and Jonny Greenwood have just returned to Oxford from London, where they were collaborating with Stipe on tracks for *Velvet Goldmine*, the glam rock-scrutinising film Stipe is currently producing. Notably, on *OK Computer*, there is evidence that Yorke's approach to lyric-writing has taken on a distinctly more oblique, Stipe-like bent.

Whatever comparisons are being made, it's clear that Radiohead have gone through something of a transitional period. It seems reasonable to declare that toying with groundbreaking studio techniques and constructing wildly ambitious musical atmospheres now

figures heavily in their collective imaginations. Queen for the '90s, anyone?

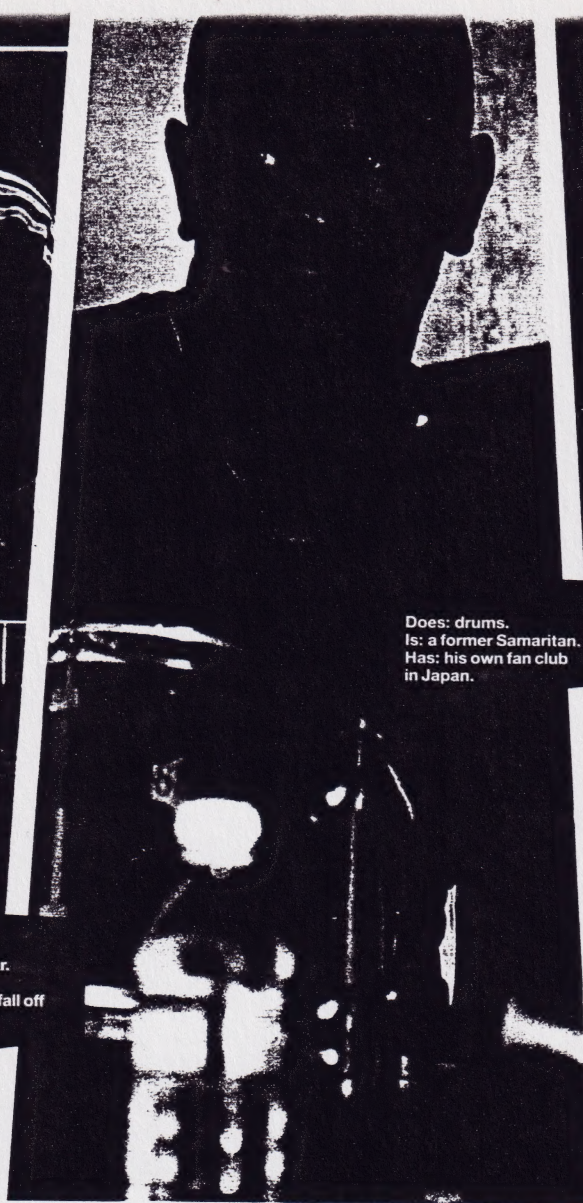
"I've been building up my chest just now so that it looks good in a white vest," warns the small and slight-framed Yorke, with his characteristic level of sarcasm. "Christ, you should've seen the tache I had last week."

**A**fter coming down from such a high as Radiohead experienced when *R.E.M.* took them under their wing and nursed them through the crucial period where they learned how to get their music across to stadium-proportioned crowds (Yorke claims his most deep-rooted nightmare is to become Jim Kerr at his worst), the band were given carte blanche to record and self-produce their next album. As a consequence, *OK Computer*, unarguably finds them breaking into new territory, from the looped-up, all-fronts assault of *Airbag*, through the searingly anthemic *Electioneering* to the soothingly effective *Exit Music (For A Film)*, ostensibly *She's Leaving Home* retold with a panicky edge.

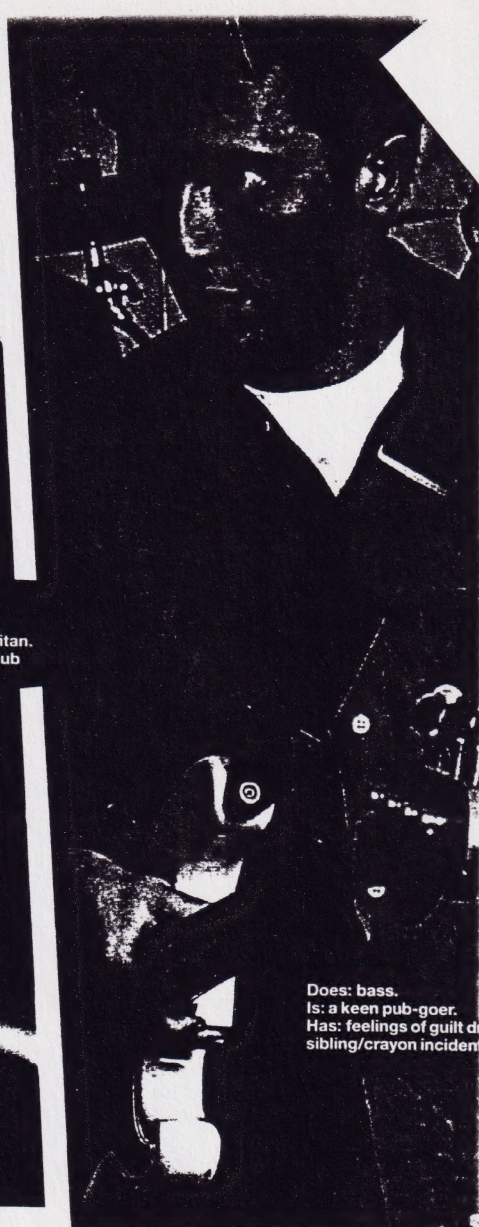




Does: "polite" guitar.  
Is: a gentle giant.  
Has: a tendency to fall off the stage.



Does: drums.  
Is: a former Samaritan.  
Has: his own fan club in Japan.



Does: bass.  
Is: a keen pub-goer.  
Has: feelings of guilt d sibling/crayon incident

## the last record you made changed his life, it means something.

Preliminary sessions began – in a stroke of magnificent indulgence, at actress Jane Seymour's mansion near Bath – in the spring of last year, the very same place where The Cure initially developed the commercially disastrous *Wild Mood Swings*. The previous summer, Johnny Cash had rented the house before an appearance at Glastonbury. The flowing-locked English Rose could be reassured that Radiohead were something less of a rock'n'roll proposition. Although they did rearrange the furniture.

"We recorded in her library," Jonny Greenwood explains. "It was wonderful going somewhere that wasn't designed for recording. Recording studios now tend to be quite scientific and clinical. You can't really impose yourself without getting over the fact that there are bag burns in the carpet and gold discs all around. It's good to go and decide that we'll turn this beautifully furnished sitting room into whatever."

While they are a five-strong band of self-confessed "neurotics anonymous", the fact that Radiohead are so keen to guard the rural location of their studio farm headquarters, where the album was completed, is indicative of their growing status as the archetypal art school-grounded

English rock band afforded the Imperial Leather-like luxury of creative freedom. This, it would seem, is a direct result of the fact that, throughout their five-year existence – while everyone's heads were turned in the directions of initially Blur, then Suede and now Oasis – Radiohead have quietly grown into a formidably successful act. Their second album, *The Bends*, has now achieved platinum status in Britain, a trend more or less followed in most record-buying nations.

When, at the beginning of 1996, Parlophone Records released *Street Spirit (Fade Out)*, the fourth, campaign-closing single from *The Bends*, its hypnotically languid tone rendered it too dark and sombre to be playlisted on Radio One. It still debuted with a one-fingered salute at Number 5. On the release of *War Child's Help* album the previous September, Radiohead's magnificently moody contribution, *Lucky* (oddly included on *OK Computer*), proved the stand-out – although the band had been forced to complete the track in an intensive five-hour period to meet the required deadline, after a day spent posing for a *War Child* camera crew dispatched to film them *pretending* to record.

"They were waiting for us to record the song, and we were waiting for them to go," smiles the unnaturally lofty Ed O'Brien, credited on the group's record sleeves for supplying "polite guitar", as opposed to Jonny Greenwood's "abusive guitar". Of the video footage depicting casualties of the Bosnian conflict that was subsequently set to the track, Yorke – never one to understate his emotional reactions – simply says, "It had me in tears".

**T**oday the five members of Radiohead, fresh from tramping through fields of rape for their Q photo session, mill around the management offices close to their recording studio, seemingly a relaxed and quietly polite bunch who enjoy a laugh of the wry and knowing variety. O'Brien, lightly stoned this afternoon, since this is effectively a day off for the band – although pockets of them will frequently disappear into an adjoining recording room to continue work on B-sides – is charming and affable and has earned a reputation as the band member renowned for his on-stage acts of over-exuberance. The band gleefully recall the guitarist once disappearing over the lip



"Are you sure this is a shortcut to the pub?": Radiohead, A Field, Oxfordshire, April 9, 1997.



## "We share the same gene pool." Colin Greenwood "I got the shallow end." Jonny Greenwood

of the stage at a theatre gig in North Carolina, tumbling into the orchestra pit and then struggling for ages to clamber back out.

Groomed drummer and, impressively, ex-Samaritan Phil Selway proves suitably genial for someone who has had a Japanese fan club – Phil Is Great – set up in his honour. Another of the Phil Is Great club's occasional meetings is planned for the following week, when Radiohead make a promotional trip to the Pacific Rim.

The Greenwood brothers, who share no distinctive physical resemblance, are polar opposites. Jonny rarely touches alcohol; Colin can regularly be located in a pub after frenzied searches five minutes before the band are due on stage. Jonny is silent unless coaxed; Colin is effusive when engaged in the topics of books, records, other bands. Jonny was likely described as "a dreamer" by his teachers, his head seemingly operating at some cloud-high altitude; Colin is sharp and wary and likely the cornerstone of Radiohead. When together, both share an inscrutable look if questioned on virtually any subject. Colin admits to feeling guilty of acting a touch cruelly to his colour-blind younger brother when they were growing up; he would mix up the crayons, which the guitarist claims "retarded me".

"We share the same gene pool," states the elder, directing another meaningful look towards his sibling.

"But I got the shallow end," adds his toothily blessed younger brother, without any detectable hesitation.

Meanwhile, the boyishly proportioned Thom Yorke pads around barefoot in blue canvas jeans, Radiohead fan club T-shirt and

Gaultier shades, his short spiky hair dyed black after extended periods as peroxide blond and retina-damaging orange. Quietly intense, he is a man possessed of a biting sharp sense of humour, although an air of brow-beaten cynicism can be detected in his every utterance.

The others simply describe Yorke as "a bit of a worrier", but it would seem that his enduring reputation as a troubled and overly angsty individual is reasonably well-deserved, despite his claims to having recently "learned to relax a little". He talks with his head bowed and eyes closed, covering his face with his hands and peering through his fingers, sometimes curling his limbs up into a tight ball, as if he is under physical attack. The prospect of Radiohead performing this summer to 40,000 people in Ireland as well as headlining a major festival (interestingly, on the same weekend as the strategically unannounced Glastonbury bill) seems to fill him with dread.

"I can't see why we're doing these big gigs," he shrugs. "Thing is, whoever it is up there, it's not the person sitting here. It's a completely different state of mind, that you have to spend a long time getting into. I can't switch it on and off. When even the logistics of these big gigs are discussed, I just fucking freeze up. It's not something I'm emotionally capable of dealing with yet. Hopefully I'll get back into a different frame of mind where it won't worry me."

While there is a certain fragile quality to Yorke, the two sides to Radiohead's chief songwriter are exemplified in those moments when his distinctive singing voice swoops down from a choirboy falsetto to a low, anguished snarl. Similarly, in conversation he can suddenly cop

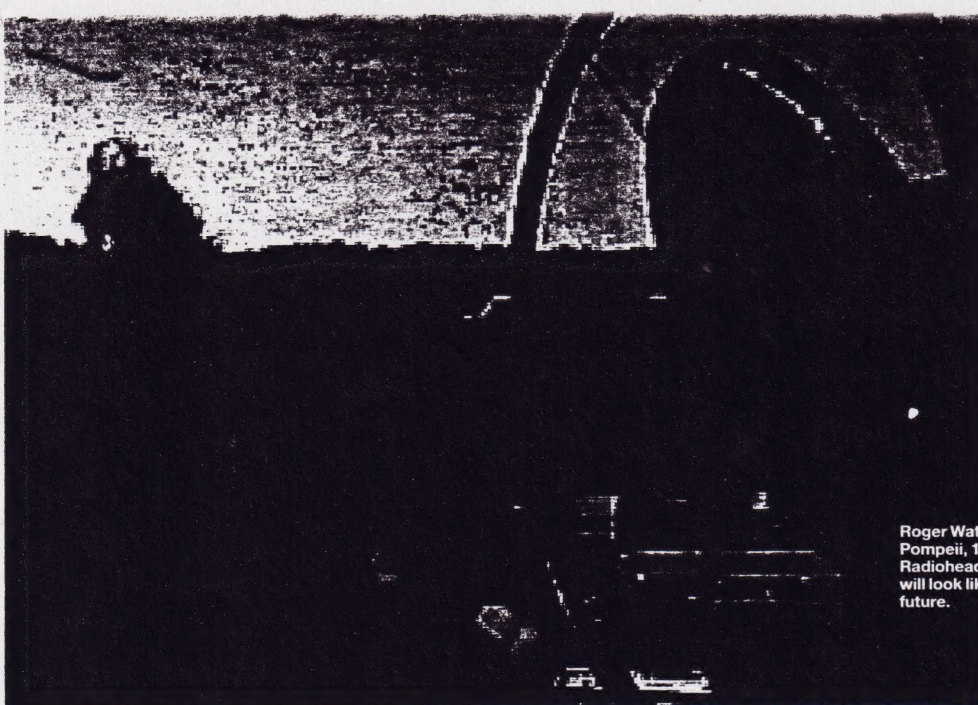
an attitude, turning shirty and argumentative. O'Brien remembers his first impression of the young Yorke when the two were involved in a play – the former acting, the latter providing musical accompaniment – at the Oxford school where Radiohead first met as teenagers.

"There was this tense dress rehearsal," O'Brien remembers, "and Thom and this other fella were jamming freeform cod jazz throughout it. The director stopped the play and shouted up to this scaffold tower thing they were playing on, trying to find out what the hell was going on. Thom started shouting down, I don't know what the fuck we're supposed to be playing. And this was to a teacher."

**B**orn with one eye closed on October 7, 1968, the infant Thom Yorke had already endured five major operations on his paralysed eyelid by the time he was six. Made to wear an eye-patch during his early school years, he was cruelly mocked by his schoolmates. He half-bitterly brushes off suggestions that this may have caused him to have a slight chip on his shoulder.

"Oh no," he states, sharply. "I was sweet and lovely and nothing ever happened to me. (cagily) When I was younger, I was in the music room most of the time, anyway. It was great. No-one came down and there were these tiny rooms with sound-proofed cubicles. I suppose I'm quite an aggressive person. I was a fighter at school, but I never won. I was into the idea of fighting (laughs hysterically). I've had to calm down a bit, otherwise I'd go nuts."





Roger Waters in Pompeii, 1972. What Radiohead's videos will look like in the future.

## "Jonny made us all watch Pink Floyd Live In Pompeii and said, Now this is how we should do videos." *Colin Greenwood*

Yorke recalls the moment in his younger life when he realised that he was perhaps not quite as handy with his fists as he'd imagined.

"In first year at college, I went through this phase where I was into this granddad hat and coat I had," he quietly explains. "They were immaculate and I was into dressing like an old man. But I went out one night and there was these three blokes, townie guys, waiting to beat someone up and they found me. They said something, I turned around, blew them a kiss and that was it. They beat the living shit out of me. One was kicking me, one had a stick and the other was smashing me in the face. That put me off fighting a bit."

Back in mid-'80s Oxford, where Radiohead first bonded and began rehearsing, essentially as the school band, they called themselves On A Friday. Selway was in the sixth form, O'Brien in the fifth year, Yorke and Colin Greenwood in

the fourth and Jonny Greenwood – the last to join – in the third.

"We're still in our same classes and years really," the elder Greenwood grimly decides. "The thing about having been together for such a long period is that there are some heinously embarrassing group shots from ten years ago when we were in adolescence with varying styles of haircut and demeanour which would now be openly laughed at in the street."

During this era, of course, the quiff was king ("You'd literally take a photograph of Morrissey to the barber and say, I want it like that") and if On A Friday resembled The Smiths visually, they had yet to find a foothold musically. The four others remember tapes of Thom Yorke's early compositions as being "schizophrenic".

"One track, Rattlesnake, just had a drum loop that Thom did himself at home on a tape

recorder with bad scratching over the top and kind of Prince vocals," Jonny Greenwood remembers. "The Chains had viola and was meant to sound like The Waterboys. What Is That You See was a feedback frenzy. After hearing it, I knew Thom was writing great songs and I knew what I wanted to do."

Nevertheless, the younger Greenwood's ambitions were thwarted by the group's reluctance to let him join. Described by them as "a precocious talent" who would whip through an assortment of instruments in an attempt to impress his potential bandmates, On A Friday's first gig at Oxford Jericho Tavern in 1987 featured (according to Selway) Jonny sitting on stage "with a harmonica, waiting for his big moment".

As each member wandered off to college or university, rehearsals would take place only during their lengthy summer breaks as students. But On A Friday were improving by leagues, and by the summer of 1991, when their first real demo went into circulation (released as the Drill EP in 1992), there were suddenly legions of A&R men cramming into the Jericho Tavern. Within weeks, On A Friday signed to Parlophone and, out of what they now class as "sheer embarrassment", changed their name to Radiohead.

As imageless as a police identity parade, and embodying such extremes of stature and build that Ed O'Brien probably towers a whole foot above Thom Yorke, Radiohead initially found it difficult to attract attention during the lifespan of their debut album, 1993's Pablo Honey, when other, more fashion-conscious outfits were hogging the limelight.

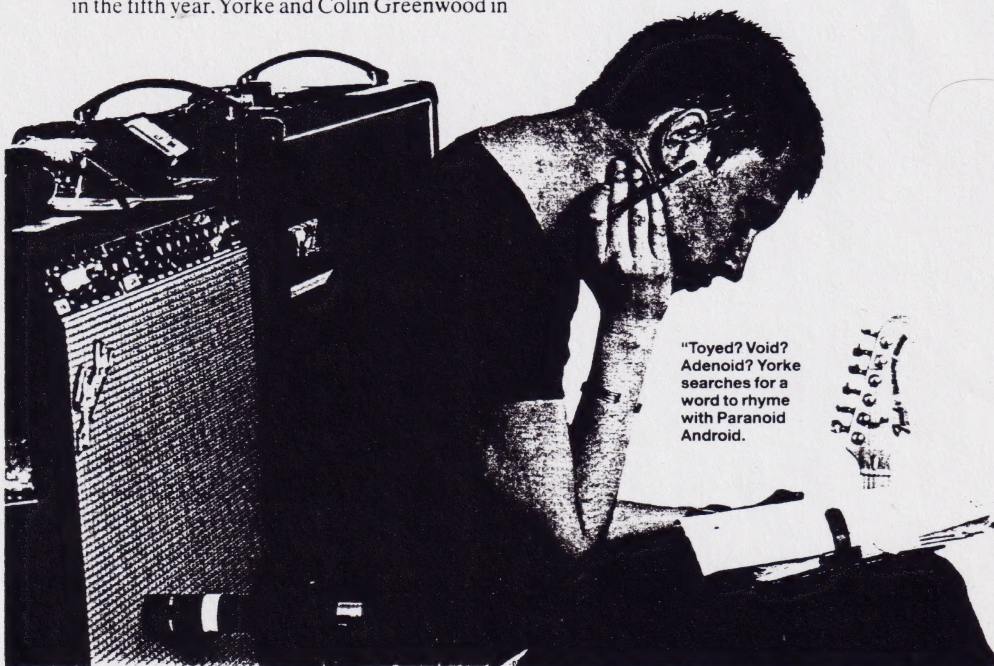
On its initial release in the UK, the second, self-hating single, the possibly classic Creep, stiffed. As with The Fixx before them and Bush afterwards, Radiohead suffered the indignity of being rejected by their motherland and embraced by America when Creep became a slacker anthem after an extended period of over-exposure on college radio. By the time Radiohead arrived in America for their first tour, Creep was already in the Billboard Top 40, and for the summer of 1993 its mutant guitar crunch and soaring melody spilled out from car radios and apartment windows all over America.

Its follow-up, the bracing Stop Whispering, failed to maintain the momentum and the band found themselves performing to capacity audiences interested in hearing one song. For a time, Yorke re-christened the song Crap.

"At that time the whole so-called alternative rock thing had happened there," remembers Yorke, "populated by sap programmers from the '80s who didn't have a clue what they were putting on and Creep suffered from that. It was a good song, but afterwards it was, Well, let's have more like that please because the programmers understand it, and it's like, No, sorry."

"We didn't know what was normal in America," Jonny Greenwood muses. "We went over there and we'd turn on MTV and Creep would be on again. We thought, Oh, that's good."

"People were being very nice to us over there because Creep was doing well," adds Selway. **13**



"Toyed? Void? Adenoid? Yorke searches for a word to rhyme with Paranoid Android."





Jane Seymour shows Radiohead around her beautiful home: Le Jardin de Max Factor not pictured.

**“We recorded in Jane Seymour’s library. It was wonderful going somewhere that wasn’t designed for recording.”** Jonny Greenwood

“Stop Whispering didn’t do quite so well, so that opened us up to the more cynical side of it.”

“We were hysterical,” decides O’Brien. “One moment we’d be giggling, the next we’d be really down. Our reactions were extreme.”

Regrettably, it was around this time that Radiohead, under pressure to visually re-invent themselves, became the tightly trousered, big-haired rock band they felt America expected of them. Jonny Greenwood and Yorke even accepted modelling assignments for American fashion magazines, the latter sporting a hellish tangle of hair extensions atop his cranium.

“I was rock,” winces the frontman with an embarrassed laugh. “There were so many elements to that period, but the hair was the worst. It was such a weird trip anyway, because suddenly we were seen as this big investment and there was money being thrown at us. It didn’t last long enough to mess us up, but then I suppose, for a while, it probably did.”

The most positive knock-on effect of Creep’s US success was that on its re-release in the UK it reached Number 7. On the negative side, Radiohead were in danger of looking like a one-trick pony. Immediately they set to work on The Bends, titled after the dramatic side-effects of emerging from the depths too rapidly. Cutting between Zooropa-fashioned loop collages (Planet Telex), folk rock (Fake Plastic Trees) and hushed atmospherics (Bulletproof), the record managed to distract the listener for long enough to forget that Creep existed. Of course, America couldn’t get its head around it.

“There’s this assumption, especially over here, that Radiohead are big in America.”

O’Brien offers. “Radiohead are *not* big in America. We had Fake Plastic Trees as a single and it was played to a radio station. They did a survey of their listeners – 18- to 25-year-old males who drive four-wheel-drive jeeps – and it came bottom of the list. The thing with Radiohead and America is that we had one pop hit there.”

“And they don’t remember it anyway because they’ve got the attention span of insects,” Yorke mutters, darkly. “Our so-called success in America was that it allowed us to do lots of things, but it also meant that somehow we *owed* somebody something. But I couldn’t work out who and I couldn’t work out how much.”

**F**lying in the face of the drug-hoovering, groupie-rogering rock band image, Radiohead present themselves as Evian-sipping abstainers, content to play a hand of bridge on their tour bus, thanking you very much. Nevertheless, the punishing 18-month touring schedule that followed The Bends was not without casualties.

There is an undercurrent of obsessiveness within the group, a matter most evident when they play live. Jonny Greenwood plays his guitar with such teeth-grindingly frantic force that he unknowingly lacerates his fingers. Recently, he has taken to strapping on an arm brace, which could be seen as a unique guitar-hero affectation. However, Greenwood insists he’s been ordered to wear it since it was diagnosed that his playing style was causing repetitive strain injury. Similarly, he is keen to point out that the bulky headphones he sported throughout the latter half

of The Bends tour are industrial ear shields he was advised to wear after suffering from a dangerously leaky lughole.

“My ear was ringing and bleeding for two weeks on an American tour,” he reveals, with strangely calm detachment. “There was this terrifying gig in Cleveland, where I was nearly fainting. I was taken to the hospital at three in the morning and the doctor said the situation was really grim. I’d love to do without both of them, but the arm brace I’m still going to need.”

“It’s conceited to deny there’s any affectation, but having said that, I enjoy putting the arm brace on before I play. It’s like taping up your fingers before a boxing match. It’s a ritual.”

The most memorably grim incident of the tour, however, occurred in Munich, when Yorke blacked out and collapsed onstage.

“That had been building up,” he mumbles while wriggling uncomfortably in his seat, head in hands. “There’d been an incident in America where I’d been really sick as fuck. This cold had got to my throat and whacked me out. It turned into laryngitis. The promoter takes you to the doctor, that’s the normal standard thing, and the doctor says, Oh no, you’re fine to play. You argue with them. They say, No, take these drugs and you’ll be fine. Then you realise the promoter is paying the doctor.”

“It got bad again in Germany because we were sleeping on a cold damp tour bus in the middle of winter. This doctor turns up – usual thing, paid by the promoter – with this huge bag of drugs. All sorts of shit, man. He offered to inject me with steroids, which I refused. I didn’t take anything because I thought I could get through it. We did the soundcheck and I was like, Oh shit, this is really bad. My voice was not there at all. By that point, it’s too late, you can’t cancel. I go on and third song in, I lost it. I remember hitting the floor and then I wasn’t there.”

He pauses and his face contorts into a perverse smile.

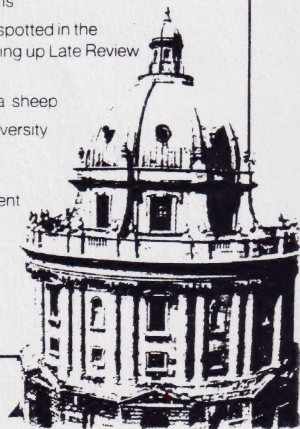
“It was great, actually.”

Most things about Thom Yorke’s burgeoning rock star status seem to trouble him deeply. ☛

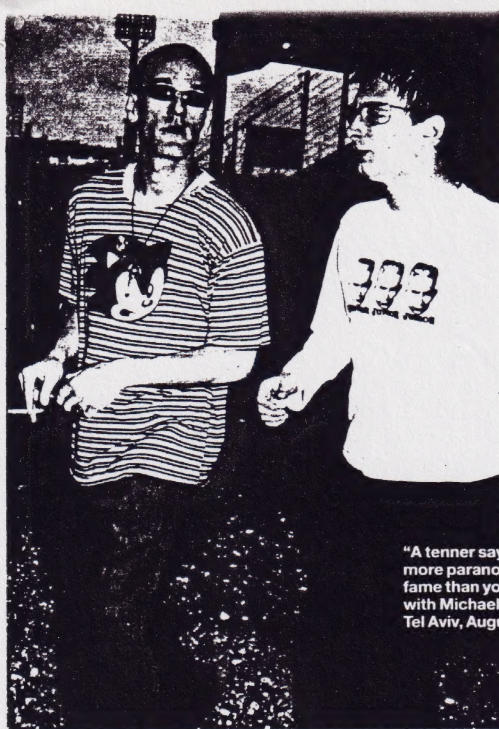
## “Bloody students”

Oxford, home of Radiohead...

1. Population is 116,000. Approximately, of course
2. A Harry Ramsden’s chip shop has just opened
3. The Park’n’Ride With Glenda Glide scheme has just closed
4. Richard Branson has a manor in Kidlington
5. Oxford United’s move to a new stadium is halted for “legal reasons”
6. Tom Paulin is often spotted in the Bodleian Library, thinking up Late Review unpleasantness
7. An Oxford Down is a sheep
8. Oxford Brookes University really means Oxford Polytechnic
9. The Oxford Movement aimed to restore High Church ideals to a more secular CofE
10. Formula 1’s Benetton team is here







"A tenner says I'm more paranoid about fame than you." Yorke with Michael Stipe, Tel Aviv, August 7, 1995.

The word he uses most frequently is "doomed". While he claims not to suffer from an acute fear of fame ("It's just that I have no respect for it"), he admits that his growing friendship with Michael Stipe has involved the R.E.M. singer offering guidance on how Yorke should deal with his concerns, although the Radiohead frontman is protective of their relationship.

"If you don't have any semblance of a normal life, then you won't be able to write," he muses, "and if you can't write, then you won't be there. He's helped me to deal with most things I couldn't deal with. The rest is not anyone else's business and that's what's great about it. Anyway. Whatever. It sounds like I've been touched by an evangelist or something."

Why still bother to make music then?

"Because I can be very drunk in a club in Oxford on a Monday night and some guy comes up to you and buys you a drink and says that the last record you made changed his life. That means something. It makes you chill about it."

As a result of the anguished nature of your lyrics, are Radiohead fans fairly obsessive individuals as a whole?

"They were. In the letters they can be, yeah. But when you meet people it's a different thing. People put pen to paper for different reasons, some of them quite weird. It was set up like that from the first record because of Creep and all the hyperbole around that, but actually we lost most of that debris when we brought out The Bends. Murderers have stopped writing to me to say how much they can relate to Creep, so that's cool. Now it's just people who're into what we're doing and there's a respect on both sides."

So your motivation is purely and simply the music you make and the reaction that you'll get from it?

"(Sarcastically) I know it sounds awful, but, yes. (Changes mood) But, y'know, that's probably lies as well..."

You do seem to eat yourself up about everything.

"I'm not eating myself up," he continues, defensively. "It's just that if I read that last

statement, I would think, Wanker. Because whoever's said it isn't being honest."

There was a certain point at which Nirvana had to pull back because they felt they were getting too big and they couldn't handle it. Can you see yourself doing the same if you get *really* famous?

"Yeah, I've got the pull-back button ready. You have to have. That hotline back to The President."

How would you do that? Release a few 17-minute singles?

"No...no there's other ways to do it. There's other shadows you can find. You can still be there. That was the thing I've had to learn recently. But it still gets to me."

Do you ever fear for the ill-effects of increased success on your mental health?

"Oh, yes," he exclaims, his mood strangely and suddenly lifting. "Thank you, yes."

Later that afternoon, as the light begins to fail, Thom Yorke appears to have returned to a more balanced state and almost rhetorically enquires, "I don't think this has been about moaning, do you?" Pulling an "urgh" face when his band mates invite him down to the beer garden of a local pub for some light tea-time refreshment, he wanders off instead in the direction of the studio to continue work on the B-sides for Paranoid Android.

As the others wend their way through the winding country lanes on the way to the hostelry,

the talk turns to the fact that their frontman seems to be bearing so much intolerable weight on his shoulders.

"It's weird to see the public representation of Thom," ventures Jonny Greenwood after a time, "because it's quite different. I find Thom to be very affectionate and child-like."

"Yeah," his brother adds, "but we don't draw the curtains of our bedrooms at night when we're going to sleep and see all these people staring up at the window. We don't have to deal with that. It's different gradations of stress. I suppose. What's important to him is, if he can have two different personas, it's a way of protecting himself."

"Well, I shared a room with him for four years," Selway laughs, before tellingly adding, "and that's *not* the man in the interviews."

**D**eeply weird bunch, Radiohead. Insular, posh, irrationally paranoid, yet capable of creating achingly beautiful songs resplendent with mind-warping sonic tricks. They might just have the potential to re-chisel the granite face of rock music, if their new-found prog edge doesn't devour them or they don't disintegrate in the process. God help them if they ever get into proper drugs.

"Us on hard drugs? That would be horrible."

Thom Yorke had stated earlier, in a lighter mood, "We'd probably end up sounding like Bryan Adams."

## Creepy

Those Radiohead covers...

### Alanis Morissette Fake Plastic Trees

Performed at certain dates on her never-ending world tour

**Colin Greenwood:** "She played it once when we were on tour with her. Very weird. She did a cover of Supergrass's Lenny as well"

**Jonny Greenwood:** "It had a very American slant. The drummer got his hand about a metre higher than Phil does when he's playing it"

### Chrissie Hynde Creep

Pretenders frontwoman performed it on *The Word* and as part of "unplugged" *The Isle Of View* set

**Colin Greenwood:** "That was alright. I thought she sang it really well"

**Yorke:** "That was great. Shame it was on *The Word*"

**O'Brien:** "Amazing voice"

### Tears For Fears Creep

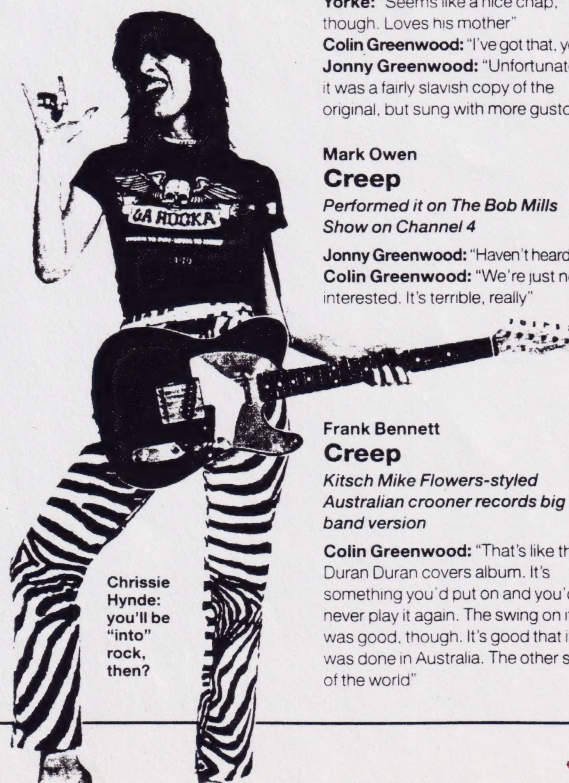
Encore on US tour promoting 1993's *Elemental* album

**O'Brien:** "We did this gig in Las Vegas with them on our first American tour. We were treated like complete shit. Everyone in his crew treated us like pigs, they were arseholes"

**Yorke:** "We trashed the stage. There

were all these great lights down the front and they were all eminently kickable. We smashed them all in and it was great"

**O'Brien:** "Later, he comes on for the encore and does Creep. We thought he was taking the piss. Apparently he loved the song and he didn't know anything about his crew being wankers to us. It was Vegas and over-the-top and cabaret"



Chrissie Hynde: you'll be "into" rock, then?

**Colin Greenwood:** "Wasn't keen. He changed the lyrics saying that he was special. And there was no self-doubt in the tone of his voice"

### Brian Kennedy Street Spirit (Fade Out)

On Kennedy's 1996 album, *A Better Man*

**O'Brien:** "Haven't heard it"

**Yorke:** "Seems like a nice chap, though. Loves his mother"

**Colin Greenwood:** "I've got that, yes"

**Jonny Greenwood:** "Unfortunately it was a fairly slavish copy of the original, but sung with more gusto"

### Mark Owen Creep

Performed it on *The Bob Mills Show* on Channel 4

**Jonny Greenwood:** "Haven't heard it"

**Colin Greenwood:** "We're just not interested. It's terrible, really"

### Frank Bennett Creep

Kitsch Mike Flowers-styled Australian crooner records big band version

**Colin Greenwood:** "That's like the Duran Duran covers album. It's something you'd put on and you'd never play it again. The swing on it was good, though. It's good that it was done in Australia. The other side of the world"